

For Immediate Release

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700 MHz Auction Supports Rural Wireless Build-Out

Montpelier, Vermont – State officials in Vermont, Maine, Nebraska, and North Dakota, in a letter to the Federal Communications Commission, praised the FCC for requiring higher build-out requirements for licenses that were part of the recently completed of the 700 MHz spectrum. The group also called for further action by industry participants to aid rural build-out of wireless service in unserved areas.

The letter, signed by officials from these states, pointed to the large bids submitted for licenses with some of the toughest build-out requirements. Representatives of these same four states had previously joined together in 2006 and 2007 to urge the FCC to adopt rules for the 700 MHz spectrum that would require more build-out in rural areas. The FCC responded in 2007 by adopting rules increasing coverage requirements for licensees and reducing the size of many of the license areas auctioned.

"We want to thank the FCC for the work that they have put into developing rules and conducting this important auction," said Commissioner David O'Brien of Vermont's Department of Public Service. "There are still communities that are waiting for wireless services; we appreciate that the FCC acknowledged that we need to do more for our communities."

The letter also called on carriers to expand service in rural unserved markets, and to make available unused frequencies to "entrepreneurs and innovators willing to try new technologies and business models, as well as to state-sponsored initiatives, which are chartered to spur service in unserved areas." Said Commissioner O'Brien: "Vermont is working with carriers to improve service for rural markets. What we need are license holders, big and small, who are willing to work with us and expand service."

In 2007, Governor Douglas signed Act 79, which committed the state to universal broadband availability and mobile wireless coverage by 2010, reformed permit processes for wireless facilities, and created the Vermont Telecommunications Authority with the power to make investments in telecommunications infrastructure.